



CHRIST's Promise to the penitent THIEF.

A

3

S E R M O N

Preached the L O R D ' s - Day before the Execution

O F

LEVI AMES,

Who suffered Death for Burglary, Oct. 21, 1773.

Æt. 22.

B Y

ANDREW ELIOT, D. D.

Pastor of a CHURCH in Boston.

Pessimè fecerunt qui hanc vocem [*bodie*] aut cum dico conjunxerunt, aut interpretati sunt *bodie* post resurrectionem.

GROTIUS.

N. B. This discourse was preached at the desire of the Prisoner, who was present when it was delivered.

B O S T O N :

Printed and Sold by JOHN BOYLE, next Door to the THREE
Doves in Marlborough-Street. 1773.

THE very short notice the Author
of the following discourse had of
the Prisoner's desire to attend his preach-
ing must be his excuse for the many
imperfections which will be found in it.
A number of his friends thought the
publication might be of service. When
he consented to give them a copy, he
did not suppose he had any right to ob-
trude another sermon in the room of
that which they requested. It appears
therefore in it's original dress. May
GOD accompany it with his blessing !



LUKE XXIII. 43.

To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.

THAT I may set these words before you in a just light, and may at the same time improve them to the purposes of religion, I shall go into the following method.

First, I shall briefly go over the story of which my text is the concluding part.

Secondly, I shall particularly explain the words now read.

Thirdly, I shall take notice of some profitable lessons we are taught by them.

Fourthly, I shall show, that there is no reason, from this instance, for any to presume on the mercy of God, so as to neglect, or defer their repentance.

I shall then apply the whole.

First, I am briefly to go over the whole story of which the text is a part.

Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ was at this time on the cross, bearing the sins of his people. To cast the greater reproach upon him, they crucified two thieves, the one on his right hand, the other on

his left ; thereby intimating that he was the most enormous offender of the three. While the inhuman spectators were deriding and insulting our Lord, “ one of the malefactors railed on him, saying, if thou be Christ, save thyself and us.” The evangelist Matthew speaks in the plural number, and so doth Mark, “ They that were crucified with him, reviled him.” From whence many expositors suppose, that the thief, who afterwards expressed himself with such penitence and faith, at first joined in this opprobrious and impious language ; but it is more probable, that the plural number is put for the singular in those evangelists, an hebraism frequently used in the sacred writings, ¶ and that we are to receive the account given by Luke as the most exact representation ; “ One of the malefactors railed on him.”

“ But the other answering, rebuked him, saying, dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation ? and we indeed justly ; for we receive the due reward of our deeds ; but this man hath done nothing amis.” Dost not thou fear God, when thou art just going to give an account of the things done in the body before his awful bar ? Dost thou dare to add to the enormities of thy former life, the guilt of insulting one who is like thyself sentenced to die, and feels the same cruel tortures to which we are condemned. And as for our punishment it is just. Our crimes deserve all the infamy and distress to which we are reduced ; but this is an innocent man, who is only a victim to envy and malice ; he hath not done any thing amis, he justly claims the character of Messiah, tho’ he doth not vouchsafe to give that proof of it which you insolently demand, and though he is now suffering as a criminal with us.—Thus this poor malefactor, when he could do it in no other way, gives glory to God by confessing his sins, and acknowledging the

¶ They who desire to see instances of this may consult *Dodridge, Macknight, Guyse*, and others.

justice of the punishment which he now suffered ; and at the same time confesses Jesus Christ, though he saw him in the most humble circumstances, “ obedient to death, even the death of the cross.”

“ And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.” We scarce find such an instance of faith in the whole book of God ! Our Lord had been condemned by the Jewish Sanhedrim and the Roman Governor, he was now suffering as a malefactor, he was deserted by his own disciples, reviled by the rulers and teachers of the people ; his external appearance was more like a slave than like a Prince and a Saviour ; yet, under all these ignominious circumstances, this criminal owns him as his Lord, believes that he had a kingdom beyond the grave, and looks to him for salvation in the future world.

Some have been very solicitous to find out how this thief came to the knowledge of Christ, so as to own his exalted character, and submit to him as Lord and Christ. Knowledge necessarily precedes faith. “ How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard ?” But though he was a thief, he might have had frequent opportunities of hearing Christ, before he was apprehended by authority ; if not, he might have heard of him from others, for the fame of Jesus, of his person, his pretensions, and his miracles, went through all the country ; the sight of Jesus would naturally bring these things to mind ; he might be affected with our Lord’s patience under his sufferings, and his meekness towards those who insulted and abused him ; and the Spirit of God might, by his secret energy, give him a new and transforming view of truths he had formerly heard with indifference, perhaps with contempt. It seems as if he must have known something of our Lord’s character, or he could not have borne that testimony to his innocence, “ this

man hath done nothing amiss." But allowing that this criminal had never heard of Jesus before, he heard enough this day, even from his enemies, to teach him, that our Lord assumed the character of the Messiah who was to come into the world; for they expressly upbraided him with pretending to be the Christ, the chosen of God; and having, probably, been educated in the Jewish religion, he was acquainted with the ancient prophecies, and the general expectation there was of the advent of the Messiah; and from the excellent spirit which our Lord exhibited, and the very cruel and wicked temper discovered by those who attended his crucifixion, he might conclude that for envy they had delivered him; and this evidence presented to one, brought, by divine influence, to a happy ingenuity of temper, and readiness of mind to embrace truth, might be a rational foundation of faith. Especially, if to all the rest was added the preternatural darkness spoken of in the next verse, and which some think was now begun. Whether we embrace one or the other of these opinions, the history mentions no expression of regard to Christ, till the other thief railed on him; we may therefore reasonably conclude that he never had believed till now: Convinced by our Lord's piety and goodness in such a trying situation, and by the miraculous circumstances which attended him, he addresses him in the language of a most noble and vigorous faith. "Lord, remember me, when thou comest into thy kingdom." Nor is his faith more to be observed than his modesty; the disciples James and John, or their ambitious mother for them, petitioned that they might sit, the one on the right hand, and the other on the left, in his kingdom, they could not be content without high preferment. But this thief doth not soar so high; as he had more just notions of the Messiah's kingdom, so he had more low thoughts of himself. "Lord, remember me," is his humble request. Let me not be cast out—Let me be admitted, even when thou comest—I ask

the penitent Thief.

no more—assign me the lowest place—it is enough—this is as much as I can hope for—it is infinitely more than I deserve.—This was the prayer of this remarkable penitent, full of faith and humility, and thus did divine grace triumph over the malice and wickedness of our Lord's enemies.—But I come now to the

Second thing proposed, which was to explain the answer of our Lord to the request made him by the penitent believing thief. “ And Jesus said unto him, verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.”

Here are three things which need particular illustration.

First, We are to enquire what we are to understand by *paradise*, into which Christ promises this humble penitent an admission. The word originally signifies a pleasant and delightful garden, and therefore the place where Adam resided before his apostacy was called paradise by the Jews. It may properly be used for any place of delight ; in our text it intends the receptacle of the spirits of just men made perfect, in the intermediate state, or during their separation from the body. To this blessed place the apostle Paul tells us he was caught up. + This paradise, many learned men suppose, is distinct from the third heaven to which the apostle was also taken up, § and where God hath fixed his throne, and displays his glory more illustriously than he doth any where else.

The next thing to be explained in the words, is what our Saviour intends when he says, “ Thou shalt be *with me* in paradise.” This passage is a full confutation of that absurd opinion, which some of the ancients entertained, that Christ descended into hell—the place of the damned. When our Saviour says by

+ 2 Cor. 12. 4.

§ Verse 2.

the Spirit of prophecy, “Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell,” the expression intends no more than that God would not leave him in the state of the dead. And so we must interpret that passage in the creed called the apostle’s, “he descended into hell,” if we receive it at all. Whatever they intended who first added it, this clause cannot be understood in any other sense consistent with truth, than that his soul went into the invisible world, where the spirits of the saints remain in a separate state, waiting for the redemption of the body. When therefore our Lord says to the penitent thief, “this day shalt thou be with me in paradise,” he intends that his separate spirit should be in that place to which he was going himself. To be with Christ constitutes the happiness of the saints.

The third thing I proposed to explain is that expression, “To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.” This phrase intimates that his soul should immediately pass into glory; that it should neither be in a place of silence and inactivity, nor should descend to a place allotted to purge and purify it.

But I hasten to the third general head, which is to take notice of several profitable lessons which we are taught in this answer of our Saviour’s to the penitent thief.

Here

First, We observe the astonishing goodness of our Lord Jesus Christ. He heard the insults and reproaches of his enemies with the most profound silence, not a word proceeded from him in answer to their invectives; but no sooner doth this humble penitent apply to him, than he attends to the voice of his supplication, and tho’ he was himself conflicting with the greatest distress and torture, he vouchsafes to give him a gracious answer. The request was, “Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.” Our blessed Saviour doth not in return reproach him

with his former crimes, with his impenitence and obduracy under the means of grace with which he had been favored ; he doth not tell him, it was too late for him to hope for mercy, after having led such a wicked life. He doth not reject him, because he had not believed in him before, or because he was just now expiring, and so could have no opportunity of testifying his regard to him in the world. No !—Our Lord knew the change which divine grace had wrought in him—he saw with infinite compassion the penitence and remorse which possessed his soul—he knew that his professions of respect and homage were sincere—and that in his heart he submitted to him as constituted Mediator between God and man : He therefore owned him as a disciple, and for his support and comfort, gave him the strongest assurance of happiness after death. The humble suppliant asks, “ Lord, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom,” Christ answers, “ This day thou shalt be with me in paradise.” Upon which Grotius observes, that our Lord promises more than was asked. It is as if he had said, “ Thou hast requested, that I would remember you when I take possession of my kingdom, I will not so long delay the desires of thine heart : but will grant a part—some first-fruits of the happiness you hope for, this very day : You shall die safe, and immediately after death divine pleasures await you.” Wonderful goodness ! Such as could proceed from none but him who is goodness itself !

Secondly, In what dignity doth our Lord Jesus Christ appear ! and with what extensive dominion is he vested ! “ This day thou shalt be with me in paradise.” He speaks like a King ; like a King upon his throne. Hanging on a cross, attended with every circumstance of infamy and distress, with what authority and majesty doth he “ not only undertake to dispense pardons, but to dispose of seats in paradise !” If he

had this power in his dying agonies, as undoubtedly he had ; how readily should we receive his declaration since he arose from the dead, " all power is given unto me, in heaven, and in earth." Our once crucified Lord is exalted above all principalities and powers, and hath authority to give eternal life to whomsoever he will. So much seems to be intended in that description which He gives of himself, + " I am he that liveth, and was dead ; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen ; and have the keys of Hades and of death." Under the word *Hades* is included the whole invisible world, the seat of the blessed, as well as the prison of the damned—The paradise of God, as well as hell the place of punishment. Of this invisible world Jesus Christ hath the keys, i. e. he hath full power and authority to assign to both the righteous and the wicked, their separate and very different apartments. " He openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth." ‡

Thirdly, We may observe from our Saviour's answer to this penitent malefactor, that the souls of the righteous do immediately pass into a state of blessedness. That this was the happy case with the thief, we have already supposed to be implied in our text ; and can any one think that this was a privilege peculiar to him ? That this man was honored in this respect above Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and the other patriarchs and prophets ? Did the soul sleep with the body, would the apostle Paul have been at all in a strait which he should chuse, whether to depart or to abide in the flesh ? Would not any christian chuse to glorify God, however imperfectly, in this world ; rather than be absolutely incapable of glorifying him at all ? Why doth Stephen with holy joy call upon Jesus to receive his spirit, if he was just going to leave a state of active service for a state of silence and inactivity ? Why does our Saviour represent the soul of

† Rev. 1. 18.

‡ Rev. 3. 7.

Lazarus, as taken into Abraham's bosom, and retaining a power of action, if separate spirits are in a state of insensibility? It is observable, that, at this very time, when Lazarus is spoken of as in a state of happiness and enjoyment, the rich man is represented as in torments, and his brethren as alive and in a probation state. It is however plain from the sacred scriptures, that the souls of the righteous do not enjoy that compleat happiness, while disunited from the body, which they will afterwards. When Christ comes to judgment he will reward men according to their works. Then will he say to the righteous, "Come ye blessed, inherit the kingdom prepared for you :" § this plainly implies that they were not in full possession of it before ; and therefore the apostle, when he speaks of those who "look for the blessed hope," connects with it "the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ." ¶

Fourthly, This instance of the mercy and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is an argument against despair of the mercy of God. The greatest, the oldest offenders, have from hence encouragement, though not to delay their repentance, yet to repent in hope of their obtaining mercy : Here was one who had been an enormous sinner, and continued, for aught that appears, impenitent, till he was actually suspended on the cross, and within a few hours of death ; yet, even this wretched sinner, upon his application to our Lord Jesus Christ, finds mercy. Surely then none need to despair, but all ought to repair to this merciful High-Priest, who is now highly exalted, to grant repentance and remission of sins ; and whose precious blood cleanseth from all sin. There is no reason to be given, why the greatest and most obdurate sinner, who is brought to submit to the Saviour and Redeemer of men, may not expect pardon and acceptance. If such sinners are excluded under the gospel dispensation, if

there are any of whose salvation there is no possibility; it must be, either because the merits of Christ are not sufficient to purchase redemption for them, or else because they are excluded from the benefit of what he hath done and suffered, by the express declaration of God. As for the first of these, surely none will venture to assert, that the merits of Christ are not sufficient to purchase pardon for the greatest and vilest offender that ever lived. As he is an infinite person, so what he did, as our surety, is of infinite worth and value, enough to answer all the demands of the law, and to procure a right to all the blessings he undertook to purchase. If any then are excluded the benefit of Christ's mediatorial transactions, it is not on account of any deficiency in what he hath done and suffered; it must be by an explicit declaration. They must be excepted, if not by name, yet by description, from the general offers of pardon and salvation, or they have no warrant to except themselves—no reason to despair of mercy, or to determine that they are either too great or too old sinners to be forgiven. But where do we find such exceptions in the word of God? Where is it said, that none shall partake of the benefits purchased by Christ, whose sins have amounted to such a degree, or who have continued so long in them? On the contrary, are not the invitations of the gospel made to all without exception? "Come unto me," says our Lord, "all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." ¶ Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely. ¶ If any man thirst, let him come. ¶ Are not the promises made absolutely to every one that believeth? ¶ "He that believeth shall be saved." § ¶ "I him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." || There is no exception, no exclusion in the gospel, but of those who are finally impenitent and unbelieving. Nor are any, who live under the sound of the gospel, excluded from

¶ Mat. xi. 28. + Rev. 22. 17. ¶ John 7. 37.

§ Mark 16. 16. || John 6. 37.

the hope of obtaining faith and repentance, and consequently pardon and salvation, but they who commit the sin against the Holy Ghost, which our Saviour tells us “shall not be forgiven.” All other kinds of sin have been, and may be pardoned. We find some of the greatest transgressors have been received to mercy. Such was Manasseh, who filled Jerusalem with innocent blood. Such were the Corinthians, according to the account the apostle Paul gives of them, in their heathen state. And such have been a multitude of others, whom God hath called by his grace. Such was the thief on the cross ; and yet our Saviour doth not in the least hesitate to assure him of pardon after death, upon his expressing his faith and repentance. And we are hereby taught, to use the words of another, “that no impurities of life, though never so foul, no crimes, though never so black, never so numerous, shut us out from mercy, provided we sincerely repent ; that the grace of God can recover wretches, even when they are at the last gasp, and just dropping into everlasting torments. Repentance, when true, is never too late, and therefore the thief upon the cross is a sovereign *antidote against despair!*” But it is a most horrible abuse of this doctrine, for any to encourage themselves in sin, from this instance of the grace of God ; and to defer their repentance, because this man found mercy in his last hours. “As to actual repentance itself, and such grace being extended to those (when they come to death’s door) who have been profligate and habitual sinners all their days, the most that can be inferred from hence is, that such a thing *may* be, but it gives us no manner of security, nor so much as one possible argument that it certainly *shall* be. Men may outstay the day of grace, God may deny them both the will and the power to repent ; and therefore this example, when truly considered, is an excellent *preservative against presumption.*” — But this brings me to the

Fourth proposition, which is to show, that there is

no reason, from this instance, for any to presume on the mercy of God, so as to neglect, or defer their repentance. There are so many circumstances which make this an extraordinary case, that it must be the greatest possible madness and folly, to reason from this example, in favor of sinners who delay their repentance to the last moment. This, indeed, shews that God can convert sinners even in a dying hour, and so long as such an exertion of divine power and grace is possible, none ought to despair. But there is a vast medium between despair and presumption, and according to the common course of divine grace, there is but little reason to entertain hopes of those, who abuse this triumph of the mercy and goodness of God, to embolden themselves in impiety and vice, and only cry to God for mercy, when they can sin no longer. To prevent such a vain confidence, I shall observe several things, which ought, in all reason, to keep us from such a misimprovement of this affecting and useful story.

First, This is a single example. I do not mean that there never was another instance, of a sinner's obtaining mercy in a dying moment; God knows how many more there may have been. But there is no other recorded in the book of God; and therefore there is no other that we can be positive about. And what color of reason is there to conclude, that we shall obtain the grace of repentance because one man did, when so many have gone out of the world in an impenitent state. We do not conduct thus in other matters. For instance, we are told, that Mithridates king of Pontus, had, by a constant use of antidotes, rendered himself proof against all kinds of poison, that he could drink the largest potion without any sensible ill effect: Would any one, because a single man had attained to such security, venture to take a dose of poison, upon the presumption that it would not affect him, when it is known what an awful effect it

hath had upon others ; and that it hath brought multitudes to a most tragical end ? No !—men act more cautiously where this life is in danger. Alas ! Why do we forget all caution, where the life of our precious and immortal souls is concerned, which is of infinitely greater importance ? Why should we encourage ourselves from the instance of the penitent thief to neglect our souls, any more than we do to expose ourselves to temporal danger, because others have escaped, when in similar circumstances ?

Secondly, The penitent thief was an extraordinary instance of faith. Our Lord was, at this time, in the depths of his humiliation, he was dying on a cross, and in such circumstances of infamy and distress, that even his own disciples seemed to question, whether this was he who was to deliver Israel. But while in such a disgraceful situation, this condemned malefactor acknowledges him to be a King, owns him as the Messiah, implores his favor, and carries his views to that spiritual kingdom, which, as one observes, “ flesh and blood and human reason could never have discovered; a kingdom, which no eye, but the eye of faith could have ever perceived, and which even they, who had enjoyed the advantage of three years instruction and conversation, never yet perfectly understood. This was a confession so resolute, so singular, so illustrious, that no preacher, no apostle, no martyr ever came up to the heightening commendations of it ; none gave so ample a testimony to the blessed Jesus, because none had this peculiar excellence, of giving it under so many disadvantageous and discouraging circumstances.” His faith is yet more illustrious, if, as most expositors suppose, he had not heard of Christ before, but embraced the first opportunity he ever had of confessing him.—What pretence can wicked and ungodly men under the gospel have, to draw this example into a precedent, to support their presumption and obstinate continuance in sin ? Can they make

the case of a man, who, perhaps, never heard of Christ; or only transiently, and who owned him when every one else forsook him, a parallel to their's, who have all their days sat under the light and preaching of the glorious gospel, and have refused to submit to this excellent Saviour, now the reproach of the cross is so effectually rolled away, and he is declared to be the Son of God with power, by his resurrection from the dead? Why should a delaying sinner take encouragement from this example of the thief, unless he were sure of having the same ingenuity of mind that he had? It is not, indeed, to be expected, that every sincere convert should attain to the same eminent degree of faith to which he arose; no doubt, the least degree of a holy regard to Jesus Christ will be accepted. But as it was very extraordinary in this man to profess Christ under such peculiar circumstances; so it is very uncommon for one who has been careless and profligate in his life, to find a heart to repent, and to resign himself up to Christ in his last moments. 'Tis true, nothing is too hard for omnipotent grace, but the enquiry is not what God *can* do, but what, according to his word, and his usual method of dealing with sinners, we may reasonably expect he *will* do; and according to these rules, we cannot look upon the extraordinary case in our text, as establishing a precedent for common and ordinary cases.

Thirdly, This was an extraordinary time, such as will never be again. The Lord of glory was expiring on a cross; it was fitting, that, at such a time, there should be some illustrious trophy of divine power and grace. What singular glory doth the conversion of this sinner reflect on our Lord Jesus Christ? By this he evidenced his superiority to the powers of earth and hell, though he saw fit to yield, for a time, to their malice. In this his most humble state, he, as it were, led captivity captive, by rescuing a soul of which Satan doubtless supposed himself secure. The other

malefactor says to our Lord with an air of insolent contempt, " If thou be Christ, save thyself and us." Our Lord could easily have done this and much more; but how then would the scriptures have been fulfilled, that thus it must be ? But though our Lord did not come down from the cross, to answer the demand of this hardened wretch, he exerted his power in a manner much more worthy of himself, and agreeably to the great design of his coming into the world ; he bowed his companion's heart, and saved him from the wrath which is to come. But what encouragement can this afford to delaying sinners ? can they suppose that the Son of God will again descend from heaven and die upon the cross ? and if such a time and such circumstances are never likely to come again, surely, no one can argue, with any degree of certainty, that he shall become a true penitent, because this was the happy case with the thief, for whose conversion there was such an extraordinary reason.

I might go on, and observe the folly and perverseness of those who encourage themselves in delays from this example, as it is dreadfully uncertain, whether they shall have an opportunity, in their expiring moments, to repent and commit themselves into the hands of the Redeemer. Many are snatched suddenly into the eternal world. Many are deprived of reason by the force of the disease with which they are visited. Others are stupid and insensible with respect to spiritual and eternal things. But the time calls me to the Improvement of the subject.

First, From what we have heard we are led to adore the sovereignty of divine grace. By sovereignty, I do not intend that God ever acts without the exercise of wisdom : An infinitely wise Being must always have the highest reason for what he does. Nor dare I say, that he hath no regard to any disposition in us,

when he confers pardon and happiness. But he is not accountable to any of his creatures, nor doth he always bestow his favors on those we should think most proper to be distinguished, nor in the time and way we should expect : The Lord seeth not as man seeth, nor are his ways our ways. Behold a miserable malefactor exercising true repentance in his dying moments, and received into favor, while the learned Scribes and Pharisees, the rulers and teachers of the people, are left impenitent and unpardonable ! The boisterous, inhuman jailor believes and is saved ; but the hopeful young ruler, who accosted our Saviour with so much respect, enquiring with great seeming earnestness, and in the prime and vigor of life, about the way of salvation, went away sorrowful ! According to our view of things, a malefactor condemned to die for his enormous crimes would be the most unlikely to be saved, but Christ makes him an eminent example of divine grace. " God hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth." And that which makes the sovereignty of God the more observable, in this instance, is, the distinction made between the two criminals. Nothing appears but that they were equal in their guilt, they had been perhaps partners in their crimes, as they were consigned to the same punishment : But behold one is taken, and the other left ! One remains hardened in his impiety, the other is melted into contrition and the most ingenuous sorrow ! It was the God of all grace who made them to differ. He, by his almighty energy, subdued the heart of the one, and made him such an illustrious penitent ; while the other breathed out blasphemies and reproaches against the Son of God, and was left to perish in his sins. The one hath infinite reason to adore the wonderful grace extended to him, the other cannot complain of injustice, he received but the just reward of his doings. And we have all reason to adore the sovereignty of God, in shewing mercy to one and leaving the other.

Secondly, How unreasonable and dangerous is their conduct, who take encouragement from the thief upon the cross, to delay their repentance ! This instance, you see, is every way extraordinary ; and therefore cannot, with the least shadow of reason, be taken as a precedent, or specimen of God's common method of dealing with sinners. It may, indeed, with reason be supposed, that there have been others, who resembled this thief in the sincerity of their repentance, as they have been like him in the lateness of it, whom God hath received to his mercy ; but have we not reason to fear, that the repentance of most, when they apprehend themselves in dying circumstances, is hypocritical and deceitful, extorted only by the terrors of an awakened conscience, and the fear of eternal misery ? Though we are to hope the best concerning particular persons, yet if we judge by examples, can we judge very favorably of death-bed repenties ? If we examine the after conduct of those, who have been raised from the gates of death, and who, in that situation, have appeared with the strongest marks of humility and penitence ; how very rare is it to find any, upon whom the impressions of religion have been abiding ! With respect to the most, " it hath happened unto them according to the true proverb, the dog is turned to his own vomit again ; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." And it deserves particular notice, that even at this extraordinary time, when our Saviour was dying on the cross, though he had mercy on one of those who were crucified with him, yet he left the other in a state of blindness and insensibility. The one is, as it were, hung up a monument of vengeance, the other is set up as a trophy of the Redeemer's victory over the Prince of darkness. There is as much reason that the one should awaken us to the greatest attention and diligence, as that the other should encourage us to hope in the mercy and grace of God. Yea, as an attention to the great things of religion is every one's immedi-

ate duty, and will be followed with unspeakable advantage, and as delays in this case are extremely dangerous, we ought to improve this whole narration, as an argument to repentance, instead of abusing it to harden ourselves, against the methods of instruction, with which an infinitely merciful God is pleased to favor us.

Let us then be excited to repair to our blessed Redeemer for pardon and salvation. Let none neglect it, seeing it is a matter of the greatest importance. Let none defer it, seeing life is uncertain, and opportunity may cease. Let none give way to dejection and despair, however great and aggravated their sins have been: You see God can extend mercy to such as you, in a consistency with the perfection of his nature, and the dignity of his government; and so long as he can, who can say but he will? Your case is hazardous, it may not be desperate. The merits of Christ are sufficient to atone for the greatest offences, there have been instances of great sinners becoming great penitents, there is no declaration in the word that excludes you from hope. There can be no reason for presumption, or for continuance in an evil course, but there is great encouragement to be found in the way of duty. It is your best, your wisest course to wait upon God, in the ways of his appointment, who can tell but he may hear the voice of your supplication, have mercy upon you, and save you? Your case is particularly hopeful, if you are roused to a deep concern and solicitude about your eternal state. Let your case be what it will, your sins small or great, many or few, the direction of the gospel is, "If any man thirst let him come to me;" and the merciful declaration is, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out."

But it is undoubtedly expected by my hearers, that I should more particularly address the poor prisoner who now stands forth in this assembly, a spectacle to angels and to men.

Unhappy young Man !

It is at your earnest and repeated desire, that I have taken upon me to be your monitor this day, probably the last Lord's-day you have to see on earth. My thoughts very soon fixed on the story of the penitent thief, upon which I have been discoursing. Your situation is in some respects similar to his—You have been a malefactor as he was—The crime for which you was apprehended is of the same kind with his—You are to die, as he did, a victim to public justice. But your case is very different from his, if he had never heard that Jesus was the Messiah till he was hanging on the cross :—You have heard this glorious truth all your days ;—You have sinned against the light of the gospel, against the love and grace of the Redeemer.—You have slighted the merciful invitations, and kind warnings with which the scriptures abound.—You have been an atrocious sinner—an obdurate offender.—You have been guilty of secret sins—You have committed presumptuous transgressions.—You have gone on from one crime to another, until your iniquity hath found you out, and you are condemned to die by the law of the land.—But I mean not to reproach you with your crimes, or to kindle relentment in the minds of my hearers against you—I pity you from my very soul—My bowels yearn, when I look upon you—a young man—in the strength and vigor of life ; and who might, in a course of nature, have lived many years, and have been, had you taken to good courses, a comfort to your friends, and a blessing to society, and consider, that you are, in a few—a very days, to be cut off from the land of the living, to suffer a public ignominious death. I pity you still more, when I consider you as an offender against the great God, the righteous Governor of the world, and in danger of his eternal wrath. You are, in a few days, to appear before the judgment seat of Jesus Christ, of which the most august tribunal in this world is but a faint

emblem—*There*, you are to give an account of the things done in the body, of all the actions of your past life—*There*, you are to hear your final doom.—In this supreme Court, there will be no occasion of witnesses to prove your guilt ; or of any to point out your violations of the divine law. Your own heart will convict you, and conscience will be instead of a thousand witnesses—*There* every mouth will be stopped ; your guilt will strike you dumb.—If you fear the destruction of your body, can your heart endure the thought of this infinitely more amazing condemnation ?—Well may your flesh tremble for fear of God ; with infinite reason may you be afraid of his judgment. We wonder not, if, in the contemplation of this amazing scene, you cry out, in terror and distress—Who shall stand before this holy Lord God—Men and brethren what shall I do ?

But, is your case desperate ?—Is there no room for hope ? Blessed be God, there is. I bring you this day glad tidings of great joy—The King of heaven is a merciful King—He can be just, and yet justify the sinner that believeth in Jesus—The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin—The instance of our text, though it give you no reason to conclude that your sins will certainly be forgiven, yet, affords a good argument against despair. You may from hence entertain some hope that you are yet within the reach of mercy. Have you been a great offender ? Jesus Christ is an almighty Saviour—Are you the chief of sinners ? attend to the words of an inspired apostle, “ it is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.”—Is the wrath of God revealed against all unrighteousness ? Are we told that “ the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God”—Are *thieves* particularly enumerated, in the catalogue the apostle Paul gives of sinners who will be excluded this blessedness ? Yet hear what this holy apostle adds,

“ Such were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” §

Repentance, you just heard, is never too late, if it be sincere ; and it is an everlasting truth, he that believeth shall be saved. Here then, *poor unhappy youth!* is a door of hope for you, even for you ;—Behold a fountain opened for sin, and for uncleanness, for wickedness of every kind. Look to the Lord JesusChrist, and thou shalt be saved. Cast yourself on the infinite mercy of God, through this divine Redeemer. Our glorious Lord is seated at the right hand of God, he hath entered into his kingdom, he hath all power committed to him in heaven and in earth. Say to him, with faith and the deepest contrition, *Lord, remember me, now thou hast taken possession of thy kingdom!* You have not, indeed, such an extraordinary opportunity to confess Christ, nor to shew your regard to him, as the penitent thief had : Christ is now far above the impious attempts of his enemies : But you may, by an eye of faith, view him as crucified, as having given his life a ransom for sinners. You may view him, standing before the throne, as a Lamb that had been slain, and there pleading the merits of his atoning sacrifice. Tho’ your faith should not attain that eminence, which distinguished the faith of the thief upon the cross, yet if it be sincere, it will be graciously accepted, and gloriously rewarded. Gloriously rewarded it will be, though you should gain only the lowest seat in heaven, though Christ should only remember you in his kingdom, and you should be last in the tokens of his favor and love.

If it should be your happy case, to be admitted to the receptacle of the blessed, and it will be, if you are a sincere penitent and a sound believer, oh ! with what humble gratitude, will you adore that rich mer-

ey—that sovereign grace, which, from the chief of sinners, hath raised you, to be a saint in glory ! and of a condemned malefactor, hath made you a King and Priest unto God ! With what holy joy, will you contemplate the wonders of redeeming love ! and praise the God of all grace, even for those ignominious sufferings, which through his infinite mercy, have been made to prepare you for a blessed immortality ! This, *poor condemned criminal !* is the happiness which the gospel reveals. This is the happiness we sincerely wish you ; and which it is possible for you, who have such a heavy load of guilt upon you, to attain. And will you not, with unceasing importunity, pray, that God would thus glorify the riches of his grace towards you ? Is there no danger that you will miss of the blessedness which the gospel reveals ? I must faithfully tell you, there is. While with pleasure I repeat that gracious declaration, so full of encouragement to sinners, “ He that believeth shall be saved,” I must set before you the dreadful contrast, “ He that believeth not shall be damned.” If you continue in impenitence and unbelief, the wrath of God will abide on you ; all the means that have been used, and all the pains that have been taken with you, by the ministers of Christ and other christians, since you have been in a state of confinement, (and few have experienced more kindness in this regard) all these will rise up in judgment to condemn you. The merciful God will have no mercy upon you—He will banish you his presence—and make you fuel for unquenchable flames. This second death is infinitely more to be dreaded than that which you are soon to suffer. “ Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do ; but fear him, which after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell ; yea, I say unto you, fear him.”—I have this day set before you life and death, blessing and cursing—oh ! be persuaded to chuse life—

Our blessed Saviour, with astonishing condescension, said to the thief upon the cross, "this day shalt thou be with me in paradise." While the Son of God thus displayed the dignity of his character, and manifested his infinite mercy to the penitent believing malefactor; what sacred joy must it afford this, I will not say unhappy, but, this truly blessed man, to have his pardon sealed by the lips of his Saviour! To hear this kind assurance from him, who was the anointed Son of God, the King of Israel!—How did his heart rise in gratitude to God!—How did he rejoice in the thought of being with him, whom he acknowledged as his Lord!—How did he anticipate the joys of heaven!—And with what pungent sorrow must he afterward be a witness of the death of this benevolent Saviour!—How must he admire his infinite philanthropy!—And in what a horrid light did he view sin, his own sins, which occasioned the sufferings of this illustrious person!—He saw the dying agonies of the Son of God—he looked to him, and mourned the wickedness, the cruelty, and ingratitude of man—He was humbled and confounded, even though he was assured by him who is truth itself, that God was pacified towards him—The larger experience he had of the grace of the Redeemer, the more would this tragic scene affect and distress him.

You, *my friend*, are not to expect, even if you are so happy as to be converted to God, that you shall have so sensible evidence of this blessed change; you will not hear your Redeemer assuring you, with an audible voice, that you shall have a place in paradise—you will not have an immediate revelation from heaven, that you are a child of God, and have an interest in the great and precious promises of the gospel. The way in which God makes it evident to his saints and people, that they are to have a place in his kingdom, is by implanting a principle of holiness, and making them

like his own blessed self. It is by their sanctification he makes it clear that they are justified. The Spirit witnesses with our spirits, that we are the children of God, by enabling us to exercise those graces, which the scripture makes the marks of God's children. It is while they walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit, that they attain to the blessed satisfaction, that there is no condemnation belonging to them. You poor prisoner ! are not like to have much time to try yourself by these marks of grace. You cannot be certain, how you should behave, if you was again allowed to appear on the stage of action, and was anew exposed to the snares and temptations of this present evil world. You have known, young and inexperienced as you are, you have known *some* upon sick-beds, who have had such views of sin, as that they have been very confident, they should never again allow themselves in it ; and yet, when God hath mercifully spared them, they have relapsed into their former vices ; yea, have become more hardened and impious than ever. How do you know ? how can you know, that you should not be like these, if you had opportunity ?—You are not like to have such opportunity—But as such instances shew you the treachery of the human heart, be very jealous of yourself—very cautious how you think your state safe—Be careful to lay the foundation right. “ Other foundation can no man lay, besides what is laid, which is Christ Jesus.” All your dependence must be upon him ; and all your expectations from him. Through him alone, you can hope for pardon. From him you must derive that divine principle, and that holy disposition, without which you cannot see the Lord. Make it your constant prayer, that you may not be deceived in a matter of such infinite importance. Adopt the language of the holy psalmist, “ Search me, O God, and know my heart, try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead

me in the way everlasting." It would be dreadful indeed! to leave the world with a lye in your right hand ; to fall from the most tow'ring hopes of future blessedness, into an abyss of darkness and misery. Be earnest with God—Be very importunate—that you may not meet with such an awful disappointment.

None of us, who are now with you before the Lord, are able to tell the time of our death—Your time is fixed—Your sentence is pronounced—In less than a week, your days will be extinct, the grave will be ready for you. You are to die before a numerous multitude of spectators. The infamy, which will attend your death, is a circumstance of little importance. Your great concern should be, that your soul may be safe. Commit this inestimable treasure, your precious and immortal spirit, into his hands, who is able to keep that which you commit unto him against that day. Think of the greatness of your sins—Think of the glory of Christ—Think what he hath done for sinful man, that he hath laid down his life a sacrifice—Think what he is now doing, that he is interceding for sinners in the court of heaven—Think of the exceeding greatness of his power, as well as riches of his grace—humbly plead for mercy. Like the poor publican, smite on your breast and say, God be merciful to me a sinner!—or take to yourself the language of the penitent thief, Lord, remember me in thy kingdom.

Never think your work done while you have a moment to live—make much of the little time you have before you—constantly read the holy scriptures—be diligent in your devout addresses to him who only can work in you to will and to do of his good pleasure—Add, God forbid! that we should cease to pray; that He would extend his compassion and grace to you, and that the destruction of your body may prove the

salvation of your soul—It may be an encouragement to you in your prayers, that a multitude of others bear you on their hearts at the throne of grace.

And now, I sincerely say, Farewell!—The God of heaven have mercy on you and bless you, and save you with an everlasting salvation!—God knows whether we shall ever again see each other's face in this world; may he, of his infinite mercy, grant us a happy meeting at the right hand of Jesus Christ!

I should gladly make some more particular improvement of the subject we have been upon, and of the melancholy spectacle before us, to this numerous assembly, many of whom their curiosity hath led hither at this time. But I have trespassed on your patience already.

You see an unhappy young person doomed to die by the sentence of the civil magistrate—Look upon him—and be thankful for those restraints of divine grace, whereby you have been kept from such presumptuous transgressions, as, in the righteous judgment of God, often terminate in ignominious punishment; and earnestly pray that he would still keep you from such evil practices. When you see this sad consequence of indulging vice, let it make you watchful against your own corruptions, and against even the occasions of sin.

May our children and young people be awakened to think on their ways, and to turn their feet into the path of God's commandments! Behold! O our children and youth! what it is to provoke the Holy Spirit of God, by rebelling against him, and resisting the kind motives he sets before you. No one arrives at the highest pitch of wickedness at once. You begin with what you think smaller transgressions, and

indulge to secret sins ; these silence the voice of conscience, grieve the Spirit of God, and provoke him to leave you to your own hearts lusts ; and no one can tell, whither these may carry you, nor in what they may end. This poor man, perhaps a few years ago, thought as little of such an early and ignominious death, as any of you. Nothing can be so effectual a security against such great transgressions, as an inward principle of holiness. This will secure the protection of him who is able to withhold you from sinning against him.

Perhaps, there are some present, who, if their crimes were brought to light, would receive punishment from men ; but remember, that you cannot escape the righteous judgment of God. Or however innocent you may be according to the law of man, yet you stand condemned by the law of God. In God's sight no flesh living can be justified. You must soon die, and give an account to him who will judge the world in righteousness. Near as this condemned criminal is to death, you may be taken out of the world before him. Yea, 'tis possible, that he may be made a monument of divine grace, and you, who now look upon him as an object of pity and compassion, may be doomed to eternal torments.

Are you enemies to God by wicked works ? This places you in a worse state, than any temporal punishment, in itself considered, could put you in. You are every moment exposed to everlasting destruction, which is worse than death. Oh ! By to Christ now, while there is hope. I have set before this poor prisoner the only way in which he can be saved. There is but one way of salvation for you and for him. Make haste, make no delay ; you run a dreadful venture every moment you put off this important concern, because the next moment may finish your time of probation, and begin your everlasting doom.

It is possible, one who has lived all his days in sin, may repent in his last moments. But will you venture your eternal all on a bare possibility? 'Tis possible, you may be the richest man in the universe, but would not he be deemed a mad-man, who, upon such presumption, should neglect to use means to procure a substance? The madness is greater, infinitely greater, to neglect the care of our souls, which are made for eternity, and are in danger of being lost forever. Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth. Many, who have depended on a future opportunity, have been cut off in their sins, and their souls have been lost forever.

Let me exhort and intreat all who may attend the execution of this poor condemned criminal, to lay to heart such an affecting sight, and to behave with decency and seriousness on such a solemn occasion. And may the awful spectacle be a means of instruction and amendment to sinners! May they find their hearts suitably impressed; and sincerely resolve that wherein they have done iniquity, they will do so no more! Let us all implore the Spirit and grace of God, to preserve us from the great transgression—from every violation of his holy law—And may others hear and fear and not dare to do so wickedly!

Let those who have reason to think their peace is made with ^{God} and hope, that when they leave this world, they shall go to be with Christ in paradise, give glory to him who hath so marvellously distinguished them. Who maketh thee to differ from other men? —from those who live in vice and sin? —or from this poor prisoner? or what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it? If God hath thus distinguished us, let us adore the sovereign mercy of God, which hath not only plucked us as brands

moob gnifilhve iwoy nized bns ,noijadolg lo

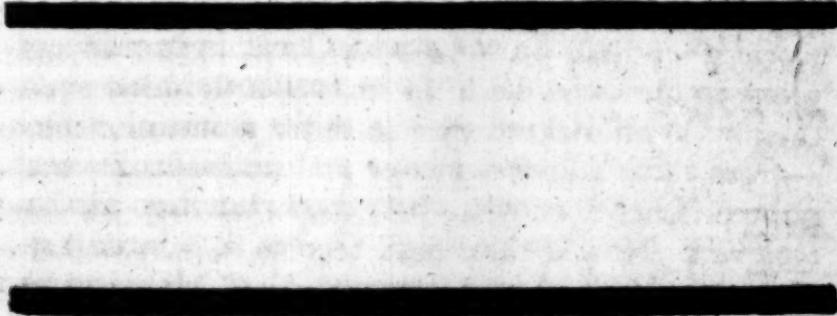
out of the burning, but raised us to the hopes of a blessed immortality.

While you give glory to God who hath called and chosen you, let me bespeak your earnest prayers to God for this poor young man, that God would give him true repentance, and display the riches of his grace in his everlasting salvation.

Let us with gratitude and joy think of that blessed time when Christ will receive us into his kingdom—when we shall be delivered from the trials and difficulties of life—when we shall be no more witnesses of the crimes of others—and shall ourselves be free from those remains of sin which attend us in this world, and shall be perfectly holy and perfectly happy. God grant, that this may be the portion of each one of us, for the sake of his dear Son Jesus Christ our Lord !

A M E N.

1831



in to ægodes ead or en heilas ead, gneat ead to god
willemonian in ead.

Ina heilas gneat ead or y ead swig heoy or NW
or swig heoy or y ead swig heoy or y ead swig
swig heoy or y ead swig heoy or y ead swig
ead to eadon ead eadon ead, constraing ead ead
ealderwic gneat ead or ead

Leffield ead to leffield ead or y ead swig heoy or NW
or swig heoy or y ead swig heoy or y ead swig
swig heoy or y ead swig heoy or y ead swig
ead to eadon ead eadon ead, constraing ead ead
ealderwic gneat ead or ead

M E M A

The RIGHT HAND of FELLOWSHIP, by the Reverend Dr. ELIOT.

To the Revd Mr Hunt and Mr Bacon.

THE Fathers of New-England, having left their native land to avoid human impositions in the worship of God, were solicitous, in laying the foundation of these Churches, to keep as close as possible to the scriptural and apostolic plan.

Their desire of conforming to this rule is particularly to be observed in the ordination of ministers; in which, without any interposition of authority, there hath been a remarkable uniformity from the first settlement of the country unto the present day. These solemnities have ever been conducted with a venerable decorum, and at the same time a truly gospel simplicity.

As our Fathers found no warrant for *dioecesan* Episcopacy in the New-Testament, they thought it unreasonable to confine the power of ordination to Bishops, as they are now by custom and human constitution distinguished from Presbyters; they chose, agreeable to scripture example, to separate their ministers by Prayer and the laying on the hands of the Presbytery.

That they might be sure not to teach for doctrines the commandments of men, the Charge to those who have been introduced into this sacred office hath been usually given in the words of inspiration. None, we are witnesses this day, can be found more expressive of the pastoral duty, none better calculated to reach the heart. When we speak in our own name, we have a right to deliver our own sentiments, and to use

our own language. But when we solemnly charge in the name of God, it will always be safest to use the language of the Holy Ghost.

The giving the *right hand* on these occasions hath never been esteemed a part of ordination, or any way essential to it. It is, however, an action full of meaning; it hath been adopted by great part of the Christian Church at the separation of ministers, and ought always to be accompanied with correspondent sentiments.

If we cannot plead an express institution for this significant rite, we are yet authorized in the use of it by apostolic example. "When James, Cephas, and John," says the apostle Paul, "perceived the grace "that was given to me, they gave to me and Barnabas "the right bands of fellowship, that we should go "unto the heathen".

The expression, *perceived the grace that was given to me*, doth not refer to Paul's private character as a Christian, but to the public character of an Apostle, which he sustained by the special appointment of Jesus Christ.

James, Cephas and John, did not hesitate, by this action, to own Paul and Barnabas, though called to the Apostolate long after them, as their Fellow-laborers, their Equals in dignity and authority. And though Barnabas had been employed in the ministry before Paul, yet being now joined together in the same work, no distinction was made, they received the same token of respect.

By this symbol, the giving the right hand, these Apostles further intended—To congratulate Paul and Barnabas on their advancement to a station of so great dignity and usefulness in the Church of Christ—

To

To testify their sincere affection for them—And their readiness to all offices of friendship and love.—

In humble imitation of these holy men, and, it is hoped, with some degree of that godly sincerity which possessed their minds ; I do, by the appointment of the Council here convened, and in their name, give you, our Beloved Brethren, the *Right Hand of Fellowship*. By this emphatic token, we declare our intire satisfaction in the ordination you have received : We acknowledge you to be Ministers of the New-Testament : And Pastors of this Church of Christ ; regularly introduced into this important station ; vested with full authority to administer all the ordinances of the Gospel ; and to separate others to the work of the ministry, whenever you shall in Providence be called to it.

We, the ministers of Christ, own you to be our equals in office ; we assure you we will not usurp dominion over you. We are persuaded you will not attempt to exalt yourselves above your Brethren.

The glorious God, we trust having counted you faithful, hath put you into the ministry. We congratulate you, that, by fixing you as lights in this golden candlestick, he is giving you an opportunity to be extensively useful. Remember, Sirs, this station will be honorable to you so far, and so far only, as you are good ministers of Jesus Christ.

We have a tender sympathy with you, when we consider the difficulties and discouragements you will meet with, in the work to which you have devoted yourselves. You may depend on all the assistance we are capable of affording you. And which is more, if you approve yourselves to God in the trust now committed to you, we can promise you the support and assistance of the great Head of the Church.

We

We know not what better to wish you, than that you may enjoy the comforts of the gospel you preach, and that after a long and successful ministry, you may, each of you, receive the reward of a good and faithful servant, from Him who holdeth the stars in his right hand.

The Address to the Brethren of the Church.

Honored and Beloved,

This Church hath been distinguished by a succession of able and faithful ministers. The praise of those who have stood in a pastoral relation to you is still in all the churches. The holy *Tucker*—The judicious *Willard*—The accomplished *Pemberton*—The learned *Prince*—The penetrating *Cumming*.—Men who will be had in everlasting remembrance. But, among these great and good men, there is no one whose name I mention with more pleasure, or whose memory deserves greater respect from you, than that of the excellent Dr. *Sewall*, who during the course of fifty six years was your faithful and laborious Pastor, and whose venerable head so lately adorned this desk. The Lord reward the kindness you have shewed to the house of his servant, and which, we doubt not, you will be ready to continue!

By the death of this Man of God, and the resignation of our dear Brother,* who for a short time served with him as a Son in the Gospel, you were left as sheep without a shepherd. We sincerely mourned your bereaved state. We hope God is now shining upon his sanctuary which hath been desolate. We trust that, under his influence, you have been led into so unanimous a choice of these his servants, who have now devoted themselves to the work of the Lord, and to the service of your souls. May you long rejoice in their light! And may they meet you all at the right hand of Christ in the great day of his appearing! AMEN.

* The Rev. Mr. SAMUEL BLAIR.

The Right-Hand of Fellowship, given by Dr. ELIOT.

To The Rev^r Peter Thacher at Maldon

THE different Religions that have obtained in the world have usually been distinguished by some peculiar mark, name, or character.

Our blessed Master would have his followers known by their mutual Love and Charity. " A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another ; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another ; by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." Happy had it been if Christians had never deviated from this excellent rule ! But alas ! How greatly hath the Christian Church degenerated, from that temper which the Gospel of Christ ever recommends, and of which he set so amiable an example, into a disposition to lord it over God's heritage, and to invade his unalienable prerogative over the consciences of men !

Our Illustrious Fathers severely felt the rage of an intolerant spirit. Persecuted at home, they sought an Asylum abroad. Providence conducted them to this, which, tho' now a pleasant land, was then an inhospitable shore, a howling wilderness.

THEY had no sooner found a secure retreat, than they took care to plant Gospel Churches, and as their necks

38 *The Right-Hand of Fellowship.*

necks had been deeply galled by the yoke of Diocesan Episcopacy, they had no disposition to wear it again; but took the freedom to form a constitution more agreeable to the sacred Oracle, and more friendly to the liberties of men.

They expressly disclaimed the name of *Independents*. *Congregational* was the title by which they chose to distinguish these Churches. They agreed to maintain communion with each other; and early declared for a *Consociation of Churches*, for their mutual help and support, and tho' this wise and judicious plan hath not been formally or explicitly received, yet a particular union and connection hath always been practically supposed. "There hath constantly" (as was observed by the Synod in 1662) "there hath constantly been in these Churches a profession of communion, in giving the *Right Hand of Fellowship* at the gathering of Churches, and ordination of Elders; which importeth a Consociation, and obligeth to the practice thereof."

BESIDES this particular design of owning and strengthening the relation which the Churches of *New-England* stood to one another, there was this more general view in giving and receiving the *Right-hand* upon these occasions, to remind both Ministers and Churches, that they ought to join in offices of love, and to be examples of this Excellent and Christian temper.

IN the use of this significant rite, our Fathers, who ever kept the scriptures in view, had apostolic example. It cannot therefore be placed among those inventions of men, which destroy the purity of Christian worship.

worship. But as it was not an express Institution, it hath never been enjoined as necessary, or essential to the ordination of a minister, though, I belieye, it hath been invariably practised.

IN conformity to the practice of these Churches, and with the most sincere affection to you, *my Brother,* I do, by the appointment of the Council now convened, and in the name of the Churches whose messengers we are, and of the Ministers here present, give you *the Right-hand of Fellowship:* By this action, we publicly acknowledge you to be a Minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We declare our willingness to help, support, and encourage you in the work committed to you, according to our ability and opportunity—We wish you success in your sacred ministrations; and shall heartily rejoice in your gifts, your fidelity, your usefulness, your acceptance.

AT the time I give you *my hand, remember, Sir,* I receive *your's.* The same friendship and brotherly kindness you have a right to expect from *us,* we on our part expect from *you*—I doubt not, my Brother, that you have the like warm affection animating your breast, that I feel in my own; and that you will exhibit yourself, and inculcate on your hearers, a spirit of candor, of benevolence, and universal charity.

YOU are descended from a Race of Ancestors who have done worthily for God in their day and generation; some of whom were among the first Ministers of *New-England.* May you prove yourself worthy your honorable descent! May you have the approbation of your great Master! and receive the reward of

40 *The Right-Hand of Fellowship.*

of a good and faithful servant from Him the great Lord and Judge of all!

Our Beloved Brethren of this Church,

WHEN it pleased the Sovereign Lord of life, to take to himself that Man of God, who had, for a long course of years, laboured among you, with exemplary diligence and fidelity, and, we hope, with great success, we trembled for the Ark of God in this place; we were deeply affected with your divisions, and the danger we saw you in of falling into unhappy contentions and alienations. We congratulate you on your present union and harmony, and on the agreeable prospect this day affords you.

You have invited your Sister Churches to join in one of the most solemn transactions in the world; we have attended your call, and have shown our readiness to those acts of communion and Christian fellowship to which we have been invited.

You have early pres'd this our dear Brother into your service, we trust you will consider his tender age, that you will make the most kind allowances, and do all you can to strengthen his hands and encourage his heart. We sincerely pray that he may be a rich blessing to you; and that you may be his crown and joy in the day of the Lord.

20 JY 63

MAY God Almighty, who is witness of this day's Solemnity, preserve every one concerned in it, from every thing that would contradict our professions and engagements! And may we all encrease in every Christian disposition, till we meet in the realms of light and peace above! AMEN.

